No. 101

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

With a sudden wild abandon, Dora threw her arms about his neck and kissed him passionately.

R. of M. C., No. 101.

Copyright 1926 by
THE NIELEN PUBLISHING CO.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

MORRIS HOPE watched his friend and patron away with heavy looks; then, as though angry with himself for his momentary despondency, turned and entered the bank again, went into his private room, and worked for an hour or more diligently; then he fell into brooding over the future that flashed before him bright as a dream of gold.

Yet bright as the path was that led from past misfortune and failure to future success, he was sad; a beautiful face came between him and the brightness, a face whose sadness shadowed the prospect.

"I wish I could forget her," he said wearily. "Well, I will work on and hope for more complete self-control as time spreads a greater distance between us. This parting was not of my seeking; still, heigho! I must bear part of the pain."

"I insist upon your seeing more society, Rosalind. I won't have you lose your looks tending an old man."

"But, dad, what could one do better than tend one's father, you dear, unselfish old fellow? I believe you often fatigue yourself by going out just to take me into what you call society. Society, indeed! You are the best society I know. I wish Gerald could come and stay with us; but I suppose he is too busy."

"He cannot well leave his practice, which has so greatly increased of late. When I am gone, my dear girl, I hope you will make your home in the old house that your mother loved so well.

"I can think of you settled safely there without fear, for I fancy, dear child, you must go through life

alone because of that girlish indiscretion. I don't feel sure that the marriage could be legally put aside. I wish you would let me tell Gerald about it.

"He would get the matter settled beyond dispute. You are so young to be bound by such a tie—so young and so beautiful, poor pet, that you may win fresh love, and what is worse, learn to love afresh."

Rosalind moved to her father's side, and said firmly:

"Father, if you love me, let the past be buried between us. I must suffer for my folly, but I am no weak, wavering woman to be swayed by another's will. I shall never love again. I have no wish to be free; if I am not Morris Hope's wife in God's sight, I am nothing.

"Do not fear for my future; I am strong, mentally and bodily, and will make no ill use of the gifts God has given me. When you are taken from me, dearest, I shall be very lonely and sorrowful, but I would not be otherwise, for could I hope to replace your love? But while you are with me I am content.

"Perhaps it may be God's will to end my work here early, and give me a holiday in Heaven with you and my angel mother. Life has been but as Dead Sea fruit to me, thanks to my own ungoverned heart and a man's deceit. But I am proud, and can bear my burden best alone. I would not have my brother despise me; I value his good opinion too highly.

"If my life is empty, perhaps a merciful Providence will fill it afresh with new duty. Now my work lies ready to my hand—I have to care for you, a privilege I cannot too greatly prize.

"But if you worry about that miserable mockery of a marriage your foolish girl entered into almost in her childhood, I will get counsel's opinion upon it, and you shall be satisfied."

"I wish you would, Rosalind; you would not then walk in the dark. Will you learn the best or worst today, dearest?"

"I will go at once, this very hour, if by doing so I can ease your mind of a fraction of the load my folly has placed upon it."

"Go, then, my girl, for I wish it. There is a Mr. Selwyn Howard staying here Go to him, and give the name of Morris, keep veiled, and learn your fate of him. I know Mr. Howard to be an honorable man."

"Mrs Edgar Bruce! I wonder who she is," murmured a distinguished-looking man with a plain, clever face.

While he wondered Rosalind entered, her tall figure heavily draped in black, her face shrouded by a thick veil.

Begging her to be seated, he faced her, his quick, keen eyes taking in every detail of dress and manner.

"You wish to see me on business, I presume, madam, as I have not the pleasure of knowing you?"

"Yes," said Rosalind, in her quiet, deliberate tone. "I came to ask your opinion on a point of law relating to matrimony."

"The only points of law, madam, that a woman should be permitted to learn should be relating to marriage. Come, be concise and candid with me, and I will advise you to the utmost of my ability."

"Some years ago a young girl eloped from school with a man she loved with reckless intensity—the sort of love, you know, that quickest wearies. The man mar-

ried her under an assumed name that poverty made it convenient for him to bear.

"The girl was under age—in fact, just seventeen, the man five-and-twenty. The girl believed the names he gave to be right, but they were his christian names only.

"Well, it was the old story; she was wayward, jealous, and suspicious; he impatient, worried and grown weary of her, and he deserted her after telling her she was not legally his wife. He went his way, she hers, by mutual consent at last. Now, what I wish to know is—are they man and wife or not?"

"Certainly they are man and wife, madam. I understand from you the man married the girl, using his christian names, leaving out his surname, the girl believing those names the only ones he possessed.

"He was of full age, the girl ignorant of deceit on his part. To render the marriage illegal she must have known of the wrong name being given. If those were the only irregularities the marriage is valid; she is legally the man's wife.

"It is a simple case. Has the man taken his supposed freedom? Does he believe he can marry again if the fit takes him?"

Rosalind's voice shook as she answered:

"I do not know his wishes."

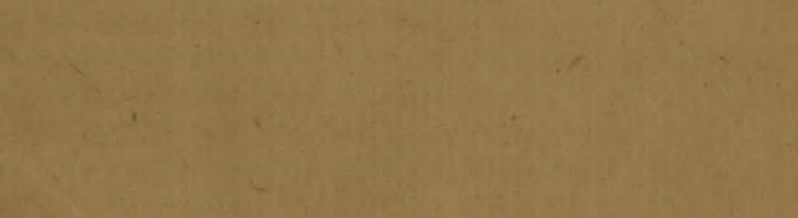
Then she rose, left his fee and departed. The lawyer rubbed his hands and chuckled, saying to himself:

"She disguised herself very well, but she could not alter that wonderful voice of hers. I shall have some work to do for her some day, I fancy; she is not one to confide in many. Ah! I never forget a voice, and I have heard those haughty tones before.

"It was, if I can trust a gift of hearing that has never yet failed, the splendidly beautiful Miss Halcombe

I met at Naples. Well, I will soon prove whether my suspicions are correct.

"I know her father. If they are in this town I'll look them up, make love to and propose for the girl, and see if she dare accept a man in face of the warning she received this morning, for, of course, she told me her own story I remember thinking when I met her that she was a woman with a history."



Chapter 333

WAR TO THE KNIFE.

A DULL November day. A young girl stood in a deserted, dreary-looking garden, holding a crimson shawl over her shoulders, waiting for someone. Now and again she would put a slender foot on an old ladder that leaned against the wall and peep over anxiously.

She was very young and lonely-looking, waiting there in her deep mourning dress. Had it not been for the extreme pallor of her face she would have been almost beautiful.

Her features were small and regular, her eyes darkly shaded with heavy curling lashes, her hair was flaxen and ly upon her forehead in close little curls like a boy's.

Dora Clyde had much of the fearless, happy nature of a boy, too.

She seemed likely to hold at heart the code of honor her dead father had laid down for her, but fortune fashions us if we cannot fashion fortune, so it remained to be proved how far her nature would hold to its integrity.

She was growing impatient, and had just decided to return to the dismal big grey house that showed a repelling front through the stiff untrained firs, when as her foot touched the rung of the ladder a distant sound of wheels arrested her attention; then, rattling down the hill at a sharp trot, came a high-stepping horse, driven by a square erect figure, the sight of which set her heart at rest.

She watched the groom take the reins and drive off to the stable, and then she saw her hero cross the meadow and spring from a fallen tree to the wall beside her.

A flush of pleasure gave her sweet, sad face all the grace it needed as she held out her hand, saying:

"I have been watching for you, Gerald; it was so dull in the house alone."

"Was it, my darling? And am I late? Forgive me, pet, and let me help you down."

He took her in his strong arms and held her for a moment, kissing her fondly before he put her down.

"You ought not to be out here, this bitter day, little girl. It is awfully risky, you know, for 'when the wind is in the east, it is good for neither man nor for beast.'"

She looked admiringly into his kind face. It was a good face, if not handsome, brightened by a pair of blue eyes that contrasted strangely with his close-cropped hair.

"I am afraid this must be our last meeting in the dear old garden, Gerald," Dora said, "for Morris Hope comes to-morrow. But let us talk of something else first. Have you been far to-day?"

"Only to the hospital and my usual round. I have brought you something I think you will like, my wee woman. See!"

He held up a gipsy ring studded with three large fiery opals.

"Oh, what a lovely ring! How good of you, dear. But are not opals awfully unlucky?"

"Are they? I hope not. I don't believe in that sort of thing myself, but if you like I'll change it. Shall I?"

"Oh, certainly not; it is a splendid ring. I shall

value it always for the sake of the dear pledge it betokens. Put it on, please."

Dora held out her little chilly hand, and Gerald took it, saying playfully, as he slipped the massive ring on her third finger:

"With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow, and promise to love, honor, and cherish you all my days."

Then he smiled to see how solemnly she took it, and putting his arms about her, kissed her fondly, saying as he did:

"Why, pet, I believe I frightened you."

"I was not frightened, dear, only it seemed real to me."

"Darling, I wish it were."

Dora crept nearer to him, and said earnestly:

"You do love me dear, and will keep loyal and true to this promise?"

"Dora, I love you beyond all this world contains. I shall be loyal and loving to you all my life, no matter how tried. I must be true, darling, for you are my better half—the half the angels have guarded to give me a chance of heaven.

"Now you must go in, my own; you are shivering. Kiss me, dear, and promise you will be brave and not allow this stranger to come between us."

With a sudden wild abandon, Dora threw her arms about his neck and kissed him passionately — his eyes, his cheeks, his lips, as though it were the last time she would caress him.

Then she fell into a violent fit of sobbing that alarmed Gerald, for Dora did not cry easily, and her emotion seemed to have gone beyond her control.

He tried to soothe her, then got troubled too, and said:

"My poor, lonely, desolate darling, how powerless I am to comfort you! If you were only my wife!"

He wrapped her closer in her shawl and kissed her with intense affection, as he bade her run in out of the cold, and then with a sigh vaulted over the wall, thinking of his girl love sadly, for she had shadowed him with her own forebodings.

Dora entered the dismal house with a little shudder—it was so lonely in the great rooms that seemed now so much too big to hold her little life.

Her old nurse met her in the hall, and said:

"There is a gentleman to see you, Miss—Mr. Morris Hope."

"Miss Clyde, I am sorry I could not come to you sooner. I hope my absence has not been the cause of any anxiety to you," said Hope, entering quietly. "You do not say you are glad to see me."

"I do not know yet if your coming means gladness. What detained you so long?"

"Business, Miss Clyde. I had to settle a lot of affairs that would be Greek to you if I were to tell you about them. I see you have not had tea, so, if you will permit me, I will join you."

"Certainly; but what shall Jane get you? You must be famished traveling this bleak weather. Jane is a famous cook."

"That is good hearing to a hungry man. How delightfully homely this old room looks! There is nothink like an English household for real comfort."

Morris Hope settled himself in her father's chair.

A sharp resentful ache struck through her heart; no one had filled that vacant seat since its master had departed; it looked too much like taking possession; so she said, pointing to another seat with a hand that shook a little at her daring:

"Pardon me, Mr. Hope, but would you mind taking this chair? It hurts me to see anyone in my poor father's place."

Morris Hope smiled a slow, cold smile, and said quietly:

"I thought the jolly little girl I have heard so much of would have grown into a sensible woman. Is it not an excess of sentiment to cherish a chair? Would it not be wiser to accustom yourself to seeing me here by your father's authority?"

Dora flushed hotly and turned away in silence, and nothing more was said on the subject that evening.

Next morning, when Mr. Hope looked for the cozy old chair, it was gone. Miss Clyde had ordered it to be removed to her own room, and in its stead was placed an equally comfortable and more handsome seat.

Morris did not say anything about the alteration, but his thin lips compressed quickly, and his deep-set steel-grey eyes flashed a momentary defiance upon Dora, who stood in the wintry sunshine, looking very fragile and fair in her soft dark drapery, relieved at throat and wrists with plain bands of spotless linen and a bunch of white blossoms in her bosom.

She mentally resented the way he had fallen into his place as master of the house which had known only her dead father's gentle rule since she could remember.

Breakfast that morning was a silent meal, for both were busy with their own thoughts. Afterwards Mr. Hope went into the study, and Dora sat down to the piano; she felt very restless, and started nervously when she saw her lover striding up the garden path with the sun on his happy face.

He kissed his hand to her gaily, and she heard Jane announce him to her guardian; then the study door closed, and she sank down by the fireside shivering with

a nameless dread, wondering how the interview would end.

Morris Hope looked up in surprise as his early visitor was announced, and with a repellent coldness asked his business.

Gerald informed him that he had been the late Mr. Clyde's friend and medical adviser, and that he had presumed to call so early to acquaint Miss Clyde's guardian with the one desire of his life, that of making her his wife so soon as the end of the year of mourning was ended.

Morris Hope heard Dr. Holcombe's statement to the end without comment; then he said, quietly, resting his square chin on his hand, and lifting the cold scrutiny of his eyes to the young man's frank face:

"I thank you for your confidence, Dr. Halcombe, thank you exceedingly, but I regret to say I cannot allow this engagement to continue. I am this lady's sole guardian, she dare not marry without my consent, and in conscientious fulfillment of her father's trust I cannot consent to such a child binding herself to the only man who has made love to her.

"You have had your innings, Dr. Halcombe, be contented with that. When my ward is twenty-one, if she continues to regard you favorably, you can take your reward without hindrance from me. I do not mean any offense to you, or unkindness to Miss Clyde. Her father held you in some esteem I know, for he made favorable mention of you in his letters to me, but I doubt if you were quite deserving of his regard since, under cover of your professional capacity, you found opportunities to fetter his child's affections."

"I fancy you want to quarrel with me, Mr. Hope. You take an unfair view of the matter, I am prompted by sincere affection alone in proposing for Miss Clyde.

I suppose even a doctor may fall into a fault common to most men—that of loving a beautiful woman intensely, and telling her so without leave, when he sees her in trouble and knows that she is left alone in the world.

"I did not know she was an heiress; and, in fact, I am sorry for her own sake that she is, for to be rich and beautiful is a great danger for her. I, at least, am a disinterested suitor, for, I am happy to say, I am far from being a poor man. Tell me—will you consent to our engagement if we wait till Miss Clyde comes of age to fulfil it?"

"I will not agree to any engagement till my ward has seen the world and learnt to know her own mind. If you are sure of her, why pester me about this? She can be true to you without being bound by any promise. Please to understand, once for all, I shall not alter my decision."

Gerald Halcombe flushed hotly; it was like beating oneself against a rock to breast this man's cold force and unabashed effrontery. He did not want to quarrel for Dora's sake, and for all the cool, smiling manner of the man, he knew he wanted to work him into anger so that there might be no pretense of friendliness to warrant further intercourse.

Gerald was silent, the flush of anger dying out of his face as he thought of the pain this interview would bring to his darling.

A great yearning came into his eyes, and his heart ached, as he resolved for his dear love's sake to make one more effort to appeal to the man before him.

So stepping nearer in the full, clear light of the morning he drew himself erect, and said:

"Mr. Hope, I am a proud man, unused to sue to anyone for a favor, yet I can humble myself for the sake of my great love to beg for common justice as from man

to man, and without unfair prejudice. Will you trust me to continue my friendship with Miss Clyde, if I promise you on my honor as a gentleman not to urge my suit until she has seen the world and learned to know her heart as I know it?"

"I am sorry you must plead to me in vain, Dr. Halcombe. My duty is clearly marked out before me. You must keep apart from my ward, or she will not have a fair chance to judge for herself of the inclination of her heart. I am sorry to seem so discourteous, but I absolutely refuse to allow my ward to continue her acquaintance with you until she comes of age, and is out of my control; then, if she recalls you, I will ask you to pardon what you now consider my harshness, and perhaps win a kinder regard from you than you now think possible."

Gerald's dark face took an ominous sternness as he said haughtily:

"I am no weak, love-sick boy to be broken down and beaten by one man's mistrust. I will be honest and open with you, Mr. Hope, and own that I will not be put aside easily. I will see my betrothed wife till she refuses to receive her father's old friend of her own free will. I will hold her to her promise against all hazards, and win her in the face of your opposition, and opposition that has a deeper cause than you would show to the world.

"You have some object in your strange attitude towards me, an object that I'll discover and frustrate, sir. You understand me; I warn you fairly; it is a matter of life and death to me, and I am not a man to fail when I have set my heart upon succeeding."

Mr. Hope rose and said with a smile of complete self-control:

"Since we quite understand each other, Dr. Hal-

combe, we may as well end this interview. We are well matched as men, and the trial of strength and skill you contemplate promises to become quite interesting. I wish you good-morning. I have much to do that must not be delayed."

Halcombe bowed with a look of cool contempt, and with a laugh Morris Hope said:

"I see by your face how matters stand. So be it, my friend. You have no fear of me, perhaps. I certainly have none of you. It is war to the knife between us!"

Chapter 334

DORA IS IN DANGER.

MR. HALCOMBE walked straight across the hall, and entered the dining-room, where Dora was anxiously awaiting him. His face told her at once that there was some unexpected trouble. What objection could that stranger make to her hero? She crossed to him swiftly and threw herself into his arms, and allowed him to kiss her in silence; then she looked into his set face, and said, breathlessly:

"What has happened, Gerald?"

And, with her sweet face hidden upon his heart, that beat alone for her, she listened while he told every detail of that interview, and ended by saying tenderly:

"If you are brave and true, Dora, we may defeat him yet. While I have your love I fear nothing. Say you love me sweetheart; say you will be true to your promise, in spite of the worst he can do to weaken the bond between us."

"Darling, nothing can weaken my love for you; sorrow, absence, opposition will but intensify it. I will be your wife one day, God willing, though all the world would prevent it. I am grieved that you should have suffered this insult in the house that always counted you its most honored guest. Forgive me, dear, for being the innocent cause, and say you will trust and love me till the end?"

"Dora, I will think of you as though you were really my wife, and will trust you as your loyal, honest nature deserves. As to loving you, pet, that is beyond my control; I must love you while I have a life to love

with."

He gathered her closer to his heart as he spoke, and she allowed his passionate caresses to stir her to equal tenderness.

A discreet tap at the door caused her to spring away from him.

Jane entered and said Mr. Hope wished to speak to his ward.

"Wait here till I come back, Gerald. I may want you," said Dora, as she swept out of the room, her pretty head held proudly erect and with just that flush of crimson on her face that it needed, making her look unusually lovely.

She pushed open the door of the library and faced her guardian, who was seated just where she used to see her father.

Morris Hope rose and offered her a chair, and then said quietly:

"Have you dismissed your lover, Miss Clyde?"

"No, I have not; neither do I intend to dismiss him at this or any time. He has always been welcome in this house, and shall continue so while I am mistress. What did you want with me?"

"I wanted to question you about this Doctor Halcombe, and to tell you that I have put an end to the engagement, if such it was."

"That you cannot do, Mr. Hope, for in spite of you I will continue true to the promise I was proud to give, and am still proud to hold."

"Nay, do not let us quarrel. I am grieved beyond measure that my anxiety for your future should make me seem harsh, but you will thank me for it some day."

"Never, never, never! For you have bruised a spirit already tried by sore affliction, made desolate a life already too lonely; tried to wrench away the only love

left to me, and done your best to make me hate you after hardly a day's acquaintance."

"I do not know what hold you had upon my father to make him trust his only child to your mercy, but I do know that you have already used your authority with harsh injustice.

"Only three years does that authority last, and I look forward to those three years with horror. You have begun your rule so cruelly that it is not hard to see how it will continue; but understand this, I would rather die than relinquish my claim to Gerald Halcombe's love. My whole heart is his, and so shall my life be his also."

"Come, come, my pretty rebel; have patience. Do not put yourself out about such a trifle as the love of a country doctor. Such beauty as yours could command the love of twenty men better placed, and better looking than he is.

"I do what I believe to be my duty. If I do it harshly it is your own fault; the remedy is in your own hands. You know you must become twenty-one some day, if you live. Now go and dismiss your lover, and come back to me in a calmer state. I wish to explain your position to you plainly, and try to make you understand that I do it all for your good."

"If you were to explain from now till doomsday you could not convince me that it is for my own good to lose the only man in the world I would take for a husband," retorted Dora with flashing eyes.

"Nay, child, you have not seen the world yet; but run away, there is no use talking any more. I won't quarrel with you, try me how you will."

Dora went back to her lover, a defiant light in her dark eyes, but the lips that bade him farewell trembled piteously. She could not bear to part with him, and

when at last he tore himself away from her clinging hold she fell upon her knees on the rug in the fire-glow and wept the bitterest tears her woman's weakness had yet known.

Three weeks passed without Dora seeing Gerald Halcombe. This seemed a stagnant state of life to her, for her love was her world. Jane, the faithful servant who had grown grey in Dora's home, sighed to see so many changes.

True, everything Morris Hope did was so well done that no one could find fault, though all felt affected by the changes that he brought about.

A severely silent man-servant came the day after Mr. Hope, a discreet, unapproachable creature, dark as his master's shadow.

Then, instead of Mr. Clyde's modest, inexpensive way of living, a French cook came and sent up wonderful dishes that tempted even Dora's failing appetite, and two smart maids hustled about assisted by a boy.

The grounds were extensive, but had been utterly neglected. Two skilled gardeners were immediately set to work to restore the wilderness to order.

Mr. Clyde's collection of valuable books were carefully arranged by Morris Hope himself, and everything in the house restored to its usual freshness. Nothing was exactly altered, yet everything was renewed.

Dora could hardly believe this was the old home, so beautified and freshened up had it become, and so pleasant and considerate was the new ruler that she wondered why she could not like him better, till she thought of Gerald. Then she felt she had reason enough.

One clear afternoon, when she had walked into the hilly high street of the quaint old town, she saw Dr. Halcombe's high dog-cart spinning along.

Gerald pulled up at the sight of her, and in an-

other moment was clasping her hands and looking into her dear eyes.

"Why darling, how ill you look! Have you been fretting?"

"Of course I have, Gerald. What else had I to do? Where have you been? I felt as if you had deserted me. I have not seen you at your study window, though I have craned my neck in that direction twenty times a day."

"I have been to London to see your father's solicitor, and find out all about the will and your guardian."

"Well, and what are the results?"

"My darling, this man Hope does possess this boasted authority; everything rests entirely under his control till you come of age. Mr. Grantham speaks of him as wealthy and well connected, and a cute man of business.

"I am afraid, my own treasure, we must bend our necks to the yoke till the three years are up. Nothing shall keep us apart, though. We must manage to meet unknown to him.

"I see that the new groom he has engaged is an old servant of mine—one who owes me a debt of gratitude. I must get him to send me the key of the stable. 'Tis a cozy place, I should think, now it has been made habitable, and we must coax Jane to play propriety."

"It sounds very horrid," sighed Dora, "but not half so horrid as never to meet at all, while yet living so near to one another."

"While you go into that shop, pet, for a fresh piece of music I'll manage Jane."

There was a bright bloom on Dora's cheeks at the late dinner that evening, and Morris thought he had never seen her look so lovely as she did in her black velvet dress, which was frilled at the square-cut bodice and elbow sleeves with soft, black lace.

A jet cross shone on her breast, jet stars on her arms, among her golden curls, and in her shell-like ears, jet buckles brightened her pretty feet and clasped her slender waist.

After dinner Morris did not linger as usual over his wine, but followed Dora up to the dimly-lighted drawing-room, and asked her for some music. She played for him willingly, anything was preferable to being obliged to talk to him. After a while he came closer to her and sat by the piano, where he could look into the dreamy beauty of her face.

"Sing something," he said, with his rare bright smile, and Dora at once complied.

She had a very sweet voice, and sent all her soul into her singing.

Morris thanked her sincerely, and seemed sorry when she said it was time for her to go to bed.

"It is very early," he said, consulting his watch; "hardly ten o'clock. Need you go so soon?"

"Yes," said Dora, flushing. "I am tired."

"Good-night," he said, holding out his hand. She placed hers in it reluctantly. He looked at her long with a yearning light in his cold eyes, as he asked gently:

"Are we still strangers still? Can't you be friendly with me, child? Am I so repugnant to you?"

Then smiling fondly, he added:

"Kiss me, Dora. I am old enough to be your father, and your father trusted me."

"It is not my fault, but yours, that I cannot do as he did. Kissing goes by favor, you know, and you have not won my favor yet."

"What am I to do to win it?"

"Give Gerald Halcombe his old hearty welcome in this house."

"Dora, that is forever impossible, and would have

been equally so to your father under present circumstances, for he had promised you to another man, one to whom he owed a deep debt of gratitude, which, to his credit, he never forgot."

Dora had grown white to the lips, and her voice sounded strange as she asked:

"To whom was my father indebted to such a fabulous extent that he promised to pay the debt with his most precious possession — his only child? Tell me to whom was I promised?"

"To me."

"To you! Then Heaven help me, for I would rather die than be your wife."

Dora drew her hand from his quickly, trembling from head to foot.

"Mind what you say, Miss Clyde, for fully as fiercely as I can love I can hate."

"Hate me, then, with all the force of your nature. I fear your hate a thousand times less than your love; that I should always loathe and despise as, perhaps without reason, I now loathe you."

"Loathe, despise, detest me if you will, yet in due proportion you shall fear me!"

Trembling with excitement an hour later, Dora stood awaiting her lover in the stable. Jane, wrapped in a warm shawl, sat reading under the light of an oil lamp that swung from the ceiling.

Dora drew her fur cloak closer about her, for it was intensely cold, and just as an impatient little pucker began to spoil her pretty forehead, the door swung back and Gerald came in ruddy and radiant with hoar-frost sparkling on his dark moustache.

Jane was discreetly invisible, so he caught his darling to his heart with a rapturous embrace and whispered caressing words in her ear.

She clung to him, declaring that such a meeting repaid the weeks of waiting, and Gerald asked tenderly if Morris Hope was good to her.

"Too good," answered Dora with a shudder.

The veins stood out like cords upon his forehead as he said hoarsely:

"Is it possible he has dared to——. Perdition! This is too much!"

"It is quite possible for him to make love to me, unfortunately, Gerald. Tell me what I can do?"

"God knows, darling. This is the worst turn fortune has served us yet. Oh, my sweetheart! How can I guard you? There is but one way, and that is to become my wife privately. Is your courage equal to a secret marriage, Dora?"

She dropped her head till it rested on his arm, then she said timidly:

"That must be only a last resource, Gerald. Your little woman is an awful coward; besides, he would be sure to find out, and forbid the marriage as my guardian."

Then she told him much that had passed between her and Morris since she last saw Gerald. His heart grew heavy with dread, for he, more worldly-wise, saw breakers ahead that her pure mind had not dreamed of.

When he gave her into Jane's charge that night, he drew the woman aside and gave her fresh instructions for guarding his treasure for him.

"Never leave her, Jane. Guard her as you would were she your own child, and I will reward you as such service deserves."

"Sir, I can serve my old master's daughter faithfully without further reward than my love for her shall give me. I promise you I will guard her as I would my life. I cannot promise more."

Gerald clasped her hand gratefully, and mentally thanked Heaven that his darling would have at least one friend with her in her hour of need.

"Now, darling, you must go back to the house; it is awfully late, and Hope might miss you. Dora, I hardly know how to let you go; I feel as full of forebodings as a foolish old woman. Tell me again that you love me, dear, for my heart is very heavy. I have to start for the Continent to-morrow morning; my father is very ill and wishes to see me at once."

Dora clung to him in farewell, assuring him passionately of her unchanging love.

Then they parted.

Hardly had Gerald left her than a hand was laid on her arm, and a hoarse, angry voice asked passiontely:

"Where have you been at this time of night? Tell me, or I shall kill you."

The moonlight shone on Morris Hope's white, set face and frenzied eyes. Dora was mute with fright, but Jane came to the rescue, saying:

"You have no reason to be so angry, sir; Miss Clyde had a headache, and so I persuaded her to take a turn in the garden."

"Silence, woman. I will deal with you presently. Go into the house; I will take care of my ward myself in the future."

Jane went but a little distance, and waited in the shadow for her young mistress, who she felt had gone through enough with parting from her lover without this fresh scene.

When they were alone, Morris turned to Dora, fiercely exclaiming:

"Where is your modesty, your prudence, to meet your lover like this? Don't deny it, I know you met him."

"I do not wish to deny it. I meet him, and will continue to meet him, in spite of you; you know that."

"As your guardian, for the sake of the good name you value so lightly, I forbid you to meet this man. Do you hear me?"

"Oh, yes, I hear you; but this man, as you call him—and I thank God he deserves the title in its best sense—is to be my husband some day, and he values his future wife too highly to compromise her. Besides, I have no pleasure but in pleasing him, and would do it at twenty times the risk of evil tongues. What care I for the opinion of the whole world if he holds me worthy to be his wife? It is the only honor I covet."

"Shameless girl! How dare you show such bravado? It is honor, is it, to let him trample your fair name beneath his feet, while it is pollution to meet my lips with yours? Yet I, and not Gerald Halcombe, shall call you wife."

"Never, never! I would kill myself rather than be yours."

"Kill yourself, then, for that is your only chance of escaping the fate you dread. I will marry you; my heart is aflame for you; your beauty maddens me. I tell you nothing can keep you from me, you shall be mine, body and soul, before another year has passed."

He put his face so near to hers, and clenched his hands upon her wrists so cruelly, that Dora uttered a smothered cry of fear.

In a second Jane was on the spot, her arms about her young mistress, saying in a voice shaken with anger:

"You must have been drinking, Mr. Hope, to so frighten my young lady, like this. I wonder you dare, knowing there is one not far off who would die to defend her."

"You wonder I dare, do you? Well, I dare do

much, and the next thing I dare is to dismiss you. You go to-morrow, you understand?"

"Oh, Mr Hope," Dora cried, "she has been with me ever since my mother died; she loves me, and is the only one I have to speak to that loved my father. She must not be sent away. It is too cruel. Say you did not mean it, say she may stay with me, for I love her almost as though she were the mother whose place she has so well supplied. She shall not go."

"She shall go; she has insulted me, and I do not take insults from anyone without paying them tenfold."

"Hush, Miss Dora, do not plead to him for me, and it is beneath you to sue to such as he. He has a heart of stone. I will go, dear, but not far, and if he wrongs you he shall be made to suffer for it. He is a wicked man, who would sacrifice all to his passion for a pretty face.

"Go in, poor child, and pray heaven to protect you. Its aid is more sure, more safe than that of a weak old woman, though she would die to serve you."

Without a word Dora went on through the moonlight sobbing on Jane's shoulder, while Morris Hope followed leisurely.

As he watched Jane lead Dora into the house he laughed a grim laugh entirely without mirth, and muttered to himself:

"When that hag has gone I shall have none but my own servants about me; then, Dora, beware, for my time will come."

Chapter 335

CRUELLY DECEIVED.

HE NEXT DAY, quite early, Jane prepared to leave the roof that had sheltered her for over twenty years. Resentment stifled the pain at her heart till Dora came rushing out of her room in her pretty white wrapper, and, flinging her arms about her old nurse's neck, sobbed wildly.

"Oh, Jane, what shall I do without you? You shall return to me one day, and I will try to recompense you then for the unkindness you are receiving now. But, Jane, what shall I do about Dr. Halcombe's letters?"

Jane looked perplexed, then said:

"Write at once, dear, and tell him what has happened. I will take your letter to him, he will not have started yet, and if you would be guided by me you will tell him not to write to you at all; you can trust one another, and letters might miscarry."

Dora drew the woman into her room, and sat down to do as she had suggested.

"I know your counsel has sense in it, Jane," she said; "but think how dreadfully desolate I shall be till he returns now that you are going away. Tell me where I can find you?"

"At my brother's in London, miss. Here's the address. If you are in danger, send for me; nothing shall keep me away. God bless you, my darling; dry your tears."

"Oh, Jane, all my life is blotted by tears; now tears, now clouds. Tell Dr. Halcombe I will remember all I have promised him, and I know he will remember

all he has promised me. Go now, dear, I hear footsteps; do not let that cruel man triumph in our sorrow."

Jane hurriedly withdrew. She came face to face with Morris Hope outside Dora's room.

He did not speak, but there was a hateful smile on his face that perhaps expressed what was in his mind far more eloquently than words could have done.

It told her plainly that he appreciated his triumph to the full; that he well knew how completely Dora was now in his power; and that he meant to use that power in the most unscrupulous way, if necessary to achieve the dastardly purpose he had in view. But Dora was powerless to help herself.

Jane's heart, as she mutely passed on, grew heavier still, for she realized more clearly than ever the terrible danger so imminently threatening the happiness of the girl she loved with such a wealth of motherly affection.

What could be done? It would never do to leave Dora at the mercy of the man in whose power an adverse fate had placed her.

Yet she herself could do nothing to avert the impending disaster.

The only hope, so far as she could see, lay in Gerald Halcombe. He must take prompt action, and that of the most effective kind. By the time Jane had come to this obvious conclusion, she had reached the young doctor's residence.

His car stood outside the gate; he was evidently just on the point of quitting home to hurry to the bedside of his stricken father.

Another moment, and Jane would have been too late to intercept him. Even, indeed, as she turned in at the gate and hurried up the path she met him coming out of the house.

He looked surprised at seeing her. Then a premonition of what her visit portended assailed him, and his face whitened.

"What is it?" he said hurriedly. "Why are you here?"

"Oh, Doctor Halcombe," Jane exclaimed, bursting into tears; "you must not go away yet—you must not!"

"Why not?" he sharply demanded. "What do you mean? What has happened?"

"The very worst that could have happened, sir. That villian has turned me adrift, so that my poor young mistress shall not even have my poor protection, and she is now completely in his toils. You must get her away from him, sir; you must not leave England until you have provided for her safety."

Gerald's mind was speedily made up. There was only one course of action that presented itself to him.

Dora had resisted his plea that she should give him the right to protect her by straightway becoming his wife; but she must be induced to reconsider her decision. The gravity of the danger to which she was now more than ever exposed must be urged upon her until she consented to fly with him.

It would be impossible for them to be married before they left England, but Jane could accompany them, and the marriage could take place soon after they had reached their destination.

Even this arrangement would necessitate some hours' delay, at a time, too, when every minute was of value to him; but he felt that, in the circumstances, he was justified in risking the postponement.

In a few terse words he explained his project to Jane. She heartily approved of it, and readily fell in with the proposition that she should accompany her

young mistress to the Continent.

But how were they to communicate the plan to Dora? Gerald must, by some means, secure an interview with her. Jane suggested that he should write to his betrothed, and undertook to deliver the letter safely to Dora.

He promptly acted upon the suggestion. The letter was speedily written. It was brief, but sufficiently urgent. The young doctor besought Dora to meet him at an old trysting-place of theirs, saying it was imperatively necessary that he should see her.

Jane was soon on her way back to Dene Lodge, the letter reposing safely in her pocket. She had a sufficiently plausible excuse for returning—she had forgotten to bring away something belonging to her.

To reach the room she had so lately occupied she had to pass that in which she and Dora had parted less than half an hour ago. Was the girl still there?

With a furtive glance around, she knocked softly at the door. It was immediately opened, and Dora stood before her. The girl's face still bore the traces of recent tears.

"You!" she ejaculated in surprise.

Jane put her finger to her lips; then, without a word, thrust Gerald's letter into Dora's hand, and glided away Another minute, and she was again outside the house, and hurrying back to Halcombe's.

She fully believed the delivery of the letter had been unobserved, but in this she was mistaken. Morris Hope had happened to be standing at the library window when she came up the path, and consequently had seen her.

In an instant he suspected that her being there in some way concerned himself and his schemes in regard to Dora.

He contrived to overhear the reason she gave for her return when the door was opened to her by one of the maids, and when she delivered Gerald's letter into Dora's keeping he was a hidden witness of the transfer.

A strange look came into his eyes. For a moment he hesitated, as if uncertain how to proceed. Then he noiselessly returned to the library, and again took up his stand at the window.

He had a pretty shrewd notion as to the import of the letter his ward had received. He did not doubt for a moment it came from Gerald Halcombe What would she do? Would she answer his rival's communication in person?

He had not very long to wait before he was able definitely to decide that that was precisely what she intended doing. He heard the front door sharply closed, and a moment after saw Dora, warmly clad in her winter furs, hastening down the garden path to the gate.

Again that curious look came into his eyes, and a sardonic smile played around his lips. Rigid as a statue he stood watching the girl.

She glanced swiftly back at the house when she reached the gate, but she did not see her guardian. He had taken the precaution to withdraw behind one of the window-curtains, which effectually screened him without in any way interfering with his own vision.

Another moment, and Dora had passed out of the gate and as hurrying along the frost-bound road. And still Morris Hope smiled that sardonic smile and watched her.

The girl found her lover already at the trysting place.

"Thank God, Dora, that you have come!" he said, fervently, as he clasped her in his arms.

Continued in next number

Interpret Your Dreams Yourself!

Mehemet Ali's

Oriental Dream Book

The Most Complete Dream Book Published

Each Dream has its Significance

This Book Tells You What It Is

THE MYSTERIES OF THE FUTURE REVEALED

EGYPT, the ancient home of dreams and wonders, the oldest land of culture and science, the land where Joseph interpreted Pharao's dreams, is also the home or birth-place of our work, where it was written by the ancients many centuries ago. It went through the hands of many powerful rulers of Egypt, till it came into the possession of Mehemet Ali, the famous warrior, who made use of it during the time of his successful reign.

This book not only solves all dreams but contains as an appendix the celebrated

BISMARCK'S WHEEL OF FORTUNE, or: ANSWERS OF DESTINY

The old manuscript of the "Wheel of Fortune," as stated by competent authorities, is to be found in the private cabinet of Count Bismarck and some believe that the great success of Bismarck is owing to his consultation of the "Wheel of Fortune"; but of this we have no positive proofs except his successful deeds, which made him one of the greatest men of the century

THE MISCELLANEOUS DEPARTMENT CONTAINS:

The art of Fortune Telling by Physiognomy, Phrenology, Astrology, also by Cards, Dominoes, Dice, Tea and Coffee Grounds, Fingers, etc., Talismans, Charms, Signs

TO WHICH IS ADDED

The lucky numbers drawing prizes in Lotteries, at Prize Entertainments, etc., also a list of Dreams, with three lucky numbers attached, list of names for ladies and gentlemen and list of letters, each with three lucky numbers attached, also a list of lucky and unlucky days for males and females, making practically four books in one

PRICE 35 CENTS

Agents can make large sales and earn good profits. Very easy to sell. Enclose amount in postage stamps and secure sample copy.
You can order Dream Book from person delivering this book or we send same well packed, by mail, postage prepaid, on receipt of price.

BARCLAY & CO.

P. O. Box 847
CINCINNATI, O.

Printed in U. S. A.